



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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### Board of Supervisors

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### **Challenges of Residential Development**

**By Shawn Williams, Vice Chairman, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors**

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Loudoun's high rate of growth over the past thirty years has presented a number of infrastructure and fiscal challenges for the county's government. As many of you are all too well aware, overcrowded schools and traffic gridlock have lowered the quality of life in our vibrant community. My goal on the Board of Supervisors has been to slow down new residential development so that our infrastructure and finances can catch up.

You might have seen the story recently in the *Loudoun Times Mirror* about a recent study conducted by the homebuilding industry on the cost of residential development. The study found that for every dollar in tax revenue collected from residential properties, those properties cost Loudoun \$1.20 in governmental services like schools and public safety. Commercial properties only cost approximately thirty-eight cents in services for every tax dollar collected. Other county studies have shown the cost of residential to be higher, but regardless of the exact figure, it is clear that residential is fiscally negative for the county and commercial is fiscally positive. That is why the Board has worked so hard to expand our commercial tax base to fix the residential/commercial imbalance in Loudoun. This strategy, which is already showing positive results, will grow tax revenues to allow both more funding for core government services like schools and lower tax rates making us more appealing to commercial investment.

This Board is also working to aggressively tackle Loudoun infrastructure issues. As I mentioned in my column last month, the Board has invested over \$700 million into transportation infrastructure, including projects like Metrorail and fixing key missing roadway links like Gloucester Parkway. Additionally, the Board has fully funded the Loudoun County Public Schools' Capital Improvement Program, including the renovation and expansion at Broad Run High School which will eliminate the need for the unacceptable trailers.

One of the largest challenges I have and will continue to face is pressure from landowners who want to convert their commercially zoned land to residential in response to market demand. To manage growth in a responsible manner, Loudoun has adopted a comprehensive land use plan. The plan envisions a suburban east, rural west and mixed use density centers. The new residential development you see in Loudoun was either approvals by prior Boards of Supervisors or construction allowed 'by-right' allowed under the current zoning code. Even if the Board of Supervisors does not approve a single new residential unit, there are approximately 30,000 units that are currently approved but not yet built. However, as long as the county continues to grow in accordance with the comprehensive plan, Loudoun should have sufficient future school and transportation infrastructure. The plan does require a refresh and this was consistent with the recent urban land institute study and recommendations. This is why I initiated a comprehensive plan amendment last year to see what can be supported around our future metro corridor. I remain concerned about land use proposals that request significant increases

to residential density as to overwhelm our planned infrastructure. I have consistently voted against requests to convert commercial to residential zoning as we don't want to give away our future opportunities to bring fiscally positive revenue to the county.

I evaluate each application on its own merits to ensure infrastructure is in place to support the development and existing county residents are getting the best possible deal. In some areas, for example around the future Metrorail Stations, I might be supportive of more mixed-use residential that gives the development the greatest opportunity for economic success. The Board needs to make sure we are prioritizing the long-term interests of Loudoun residents in all land use decisions. In many cases, this will require patience as we work to develop the county in a responsible and fiscally sustainable manner.

If you have any questions about this or other county issues, please email me at [shawn.williams@loudoun.gov](mailto:shawn.williams@loudoun.gov) or call my office at 703-771-5088. For my frequent updates, visit [www.loudoun.gov/broadrun](http://www.loudoun.gov/broadrun) to sign up for my email newsletter and 'like' my facebook page.